

Testimony in Support of H.B. 6616:
An Act Concerning Expansion of HUSKY Health Benefits to those Ineligible due to Immigration Status
February 9, 2023

Dear Senator Lesser, Representative Gilchrist, and Distinguished Members of the Human Services Committee;

My name is Julia Rosenberg. I am a pediatrician and physician scientist, originally from Connecticut, who has returned to my home state to practice medicine in New Haven, where I work in the community as a pediatrician.

I am writing in **support** of H.B. 6616, An Act Concerning Expansion of HUSKY Health Benefits to those Ineligible due to Immigration Status.

As a pediatrician, I have a simple mission: to provide compassionate care for vulnerable children and families. However, because not all undocumented children are currently eligible for state Medicaid, this not possible for thousand undocumented children in our state who could be eligible with passage of this bill. Over the past few years, Connecticut has made significant strides. For children 12 and under, Connecticut has joined our neighbors Vermont, Maine, Rhode Island, and New Jersey who passed recent legislation, as well as the six states and Washington, DC who already provide undocumented children the healthcare they need. Connecticut is poised to lead the way in ensuring all of our residents, regardless of documentation status, receive the health care they need.

Children's health suffers without insurance coverage. Compared with their uninsured peers, insured children:

- Avoid risky behaviors (like drug and alcohol use)
- Do better in school, have better school attendance, and have more successful careers
- Have better health as adults, with fewer costly and painful chronic conditions

I do not want to have to tell another family that their child's recent celebration of their 13th birthday disqualifies them from receiving essential health care.

As a pediatrician, I worry and care for the children I see, but I worry even more for those whom I do not see—those who cannot receive care because of lack of insurance eligibility. With regular healthcare, children and parents build trusting relationships with their clinicians. Parents turn to physicians to promptly identify everything from developmental delays to mental health disorders to medical problems. The relationship built from consistent, reliable care can reduce unnecessary and expensive emergency room visits, hospitalizations, and preventable illnesses.

For the many undocumented children without insurance who have already faced significant trauma, serious problems may only come to medical attention when it's too late. That results in costly, and sometimes dangerous, consequences that should have been preventable—from hospitalizations to permanent developmental disability.

I applaud our state in beginning to address this pressing need. Passage of H.B. 6616 is critical to continue the work to support the physical and mental health of all children in Connecticut. Insuring all residents regardless of documentation status is an upfront investment that will ultimately result in a brighter and healthier future for Connecticut's next generations. Thank you for your time and consideration in the passage of H.B. 6616, which will benefit not only Connecticut's children and families, but also the health and wellbeing of our state and its future.

Sincerely,



Julia Rosenberg MD MHS